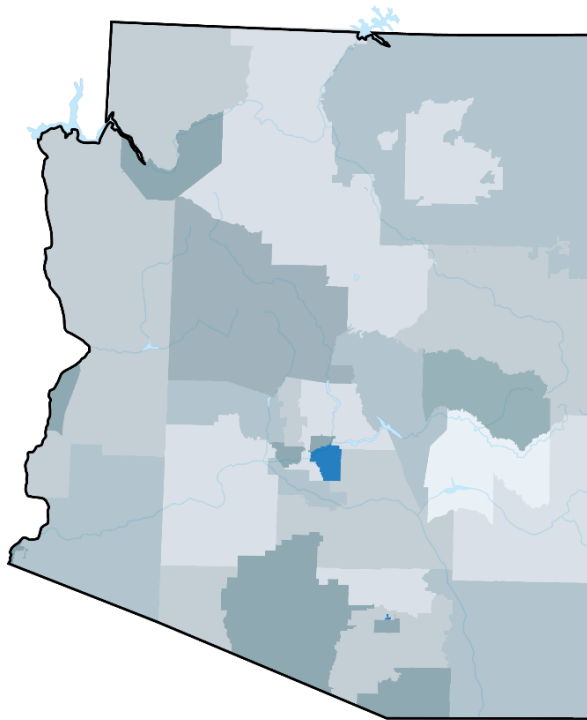




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 68,744



State Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 21, 2025



Mission

First Things First is an essential leader and partner in creating a family-centered, equitable, high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, well-being, health and education of all Arizona’s children, birth to age 5.

Vision

All Arizona’s children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

Regional Partnership Councils

First Things First’s statewide Board and its 28 regional partnership councils share the responsibility of ensuring that early childhood funds are invested in strategies aimed at improving educational and health outcomes for young children. Regional partnership councils identify the unique needs of their communities and decide how to best support young children and families in their areas. Regional councils, comprised of local volunteers, provide vision and leadership, governance and oversight. They identify, implement and fund strategies and build collaborations aimed at helping young children across Arizona succeed in school and life.

Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Shiloh Murillo, chair, child care provider

David Crummey, vice chair, member of the business community

Jarrad Bittner, at-large representative

Justin Bradshaw, representative of the faith community

Ashley Brubaker, health services provider

Lisa Cartwright-Harris, at-large representative

Annapurna Ganesh, early childhood educator

Kimberly Hatt, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Stephanie Montez, public school administrator

Mariko Owen, at-large representative

Jeffrey Zetino, representative of a philanthropic organization

Sheri Collins, regional director, First Things First

Jennifer Pike, administrative specialist, First Things First

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$11,311,839	\$11,311,839	\$8,802,085	\$11,310,565
Population Based Allocation	\$9,274,448	\$9,274,448	\$8,382,797	\$9,274,448
Discretionary Allocation	\$2,037,391	\$2,037,391	\$419,288	\$2,036,117
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$3,655,218	\$4,739,865	\$4,149,753	\$1,049,886
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$14,967,057	\$16,051,704	\$12,951,838	\$12,360,451
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Projected Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$37,000	\$37,314	\$37,314	\$37,314
Quality First Assessment		\$1,503		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$1,111,090	\$1,286,826	\$1,288,329	\$1,288,329
Quality First Scholarships	\$3,874,627	\$3,874,627	\$3,874,627	\$3,874,627
First Things First College Scholarships	\$216,000	\$216,000	\$216,000	\$216,000
Care Coordination Medical Home	\$250,000			
Child Care Health Consultation	\$251,600	\$324,047	\$324,047	\$324,047
Children's Health Systems Change	\$74,999	\$97,666	\$97,666	\$97,666
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$694,620	\$694,620	\$694,620	\$694,620
Oral Health	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$450,000
Family Resource Centers	\$1,650,000	\$1,650,000	\$1,650,000	\$1,650,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$129,166	\$129,166	\$129,166	\$129,166
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Home Visitation	\$2,990,707	\$2,990,707	\$2,990,707	\$2,990,707
Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System	\$86,000	\$63,333	\$63,333	\$63,333
Partnering with Child Welfare Systems	\$16,666	\$16,666	\$16,666	\$16,666
Reach Out and Read	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$469,679	\$469,679	\$469,679	\$469,679
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Media	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Total	\$12,972,154	\$12,972,154	\$12,972,154	\$12,972,154
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$1,994,903	\$3,079,550	(\$20,316)	(\$611,703)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		90.12 %	91.87 %	91.87 %	91.87 %
% to Quality First**	10.74%	10.78 %	12.70 %	12.71 %	12.71 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	91.43%				
% to Quality First**	12.23%				

*Per FTF State Board direction, allotments reflect the budgeting of projected spending, therefore in some years' total allotments may exceed total means of financing. However, actual expenditures against the allotments are expected to be fully supported by revenues, and each year the region is anticipated to end with a carry forward balance which is reflected in the subsequent year's carry forward balance.

**Includes Quality First Academy, Quality First Coaching and Incentives, Quality First Assessment and Child Care Health Consultation.

SOUTHEAST MARICOPA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Please describe how the Regional Partnership Council's SFY24-27 Strategic Plan promotes equity and support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families.

The First Things First Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is committed to advancing equity. The FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Council's State Fiscal Years 2024-2027 Strategic Plan intentionally strives to put the most vulnerable children and families at its center, building on the existing resilience while recognizing the variety of factors that marginalize families from the early childhood system.

Using the needs and assets report and the family support community needs assessment, the regional council discussed how race, sex, gender identity, income, age, educational attainment, mental and physical ability, language and national origin impact access to and utilization of quality early childhood supports. The regional council used a Geographic Information System (GIS) to visualize this data and discussed differences in the needs of families based on where they lived in the region. Data and council members' experience highlighted that children living in west Mesa experience more marginalizing factors than other areas of the region.

To support the most vulnerable families, the FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council discussed at length how strategies could be designed to increase access to those most in need. For example, the regional council increased the number of family resource centers from two to five locations, ensuring these centers are located in zip codes where families with the highest needs live. The regional council also explored how outreach efforts focus on reaching those most marginalized. As a result, the regional council continues to invest in home visitation while focusing outreach efforts in west Mesa to ensure families in that area are connected and know about these services. The FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council considered new strategies that better support underserved communities. A new strategy to this 4-year grant cycle is Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care. Some families cannot afford, or do not choose, to use formal child care for a variety of factors, including language barriers. Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care will increase the quality of care for children in these settings. To address income barriers to access the formal child care system, the regional council continues to invest in Quality First Scholarships. These scholarships help families afford high-quality care for their children.

The FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council's SFY24-27 Strategic Plan shows a commitment to equity that strengthens the early childhood system and its families in the Southeast Maricopa Region.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
SOUTHEAST MARICOPA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Quality First

- Quality First Academy (prioritized)
- Quality First Coaching and Incentives (prioritized)

Access to Quality Care

- Quality First Scholarships (prioritized)
- Early Learning Systems Change (prioritized)

Successes:

Quality First:

In SFY24, Quality First implemented a revision to the model resulting in service levels that are based on the needs of participating centers and homes, more targeted administration support and additional hours for Child Care Health Consultation.

Together, First Things First and the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) developed and facilitated information sessions and resources for Quality First participants to discuss the end of the federal funds and what SFY25 would look like for their participation, whether continuing or not.

At the end of SFY24, 81.0% percentage of programs were achieving quality levels.

As documented last year, the FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council added \$250,000 to the SFY25 funding plan for Quality First in the region to absorb some of the DES Division of Child Care expansion sites targeting zip codes with the highest need, including 85201, 85204, 85208 and 85209 in Mesa and 85233 in Gilbert. Due to the regional council's continued and increased investment in Quality First, 11 regulated early care and education programs funded through the federal pandemic relief funds maintained their participation in SFY25 from existing vacancies in the region and the efficiencies from the revisions.

Quality First Scholarships:

First Things First increased the Quality First Scholarship reimbursement rate to the cost of quality in SFY25, informed by a study conducted in 2021. This increase supports a robust and stable network of child care providers and continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

Coordinated planning with the DES allowed for 125 children statewide to be transitioned from Quality First Scholarships to DES Child Care Assistance in advance of the end of the federal funds.

Challenges:

Quality First:

Federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of Quality First ended before the start of SFY25. In the Southeast Maricopa Region, 54 programs were funded through the federal pandemic relief funds, which resulted in 43 participants that transitioned to the Quality First waitlist starting July 1, 2024. All programs moved to the waitlist that have a rating that will expire in SFY25, will have the opportunity to be reassessed to maintain a valid star rating.

Quality First Scholarships:

Reimbursing Quality First Scholarships at the 2021 cost of quality has resulted in fewer scholarships in SFY25 (approximately half the number) for the same amount of funding from the previous year. In planning for SFY26, regional partnership councils had to consider the regional impact the reduction had and make decisions to ensure that additional reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways.

First Things First and the DES will continue to work towards ways to support access to quality early learning to ensure efficient use of funds to serve as many children as possible.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Resource Centers (prioritized)
- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)
- Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System (prioritized)

Language and Literacy

- Reach Out and Read (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Home Visitation:

To serve high-risk families and accommodate local community needs, grant partners implement the home visitation models, Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families Arizona and Nurse-Family Partnership. These home visitation models provide various intervention approaches to address varying levels of need for families within the region, ranging from preventative and early intervention to more intensive and specialized support based on individual circumstances. Family retention and completion in programs remain high and a priority for grant partners.

The grant partners provide incentives, monthly socializations and flexible home visits to accomplish this goal. Grantees offer diapers, books and car seats as incentives and find that families need these items. One grant partner uses a Mystery Book Box Club program as an incentive. Families who enroll in the program receive a box with three books paired with fun, educational activities that caregivers can use when reading the book with their child. Quarterly, families receive a box with one book and activities.

During State Fiscal Year 2024, grant partners encountered staffing challenges leading to intermittent delays in services for families. Most home visitors have been hired and working to maintain and build caseloads. Recruitment and retention of staff across the family support field, statewide and nationally, has been an ongoing challenge not unique to the program or the region.

Family Resource Center:

The regional council strategically targeted zip codes with the highest need, including 85201, 85204, 85208 and 85209 in Mesa and 85233 in Gilbert, for the location of each of the family resource centers to focus on families in high-needs areas where the most vulnerable young children and their families live.

Grant partners encounter many families looking for necessities like diapers, food banks and rental and utility assistance. Families are also asking for help with AHCCSS and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides food benefits to low-income families. Grantees are building strong community partners to help refer families to these services and make follow-up contact with the families to ensure they get the services needed. One grantee reorganized their diaper bank and collaborated with other community partners in this effort.

Grant partners also offer parenting activities focusing on a fun, educational experience with a takeaway that caregivers can utilize at home with their child since many of these children are not in quality child care centers or preschools.

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:

The Arizona Family Resource Center Network (AZFRN) is being led by Prevent Child Abuse Arizona (PCAAZ). PCAAZ led the facilitation and support of the AZFRN for its first year in SFY24. This systems change effort is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. To date, there have been many successes which included the following:

- The AZFRN facilitated the first family resource center summit in August of 2024. A total of 120 AZFRN members from 47 family resource centers attended the event. The goal of the summit was to provide members of the AZFRN an opportunity to collaborate and exchange information about their individual locations, attend professional development workshops and hear an update on the national movement to uplift family resource centers.
- Delivered four, two-day Standards of Quality Certification trainings. The nationally-adopted Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support Certification is designed to be used by all family strengthening and support stakeholders, including public departments, foundations, community-based organizations and families, as a tool for planning, providing, and assessing quality services. The goal is that the implementation of the standards will help ensure that families are supported and strengthened through quality practice. There were a total of 112 participants that successfully completed both trainings and received their certificates.
- Implemented a variety of professional development opportunities, including a six-part virtual training on six protective factors and a Raising a Reader certification training with 34 participants.
- Conducted two communities of practice meetings for family resource center staff.
- Developed a family resource center awareness and advocacy committee focused on coordinating tours for elected officials.
- Prevent Child Abuse Arizona has been instrumental in convening state partners including the AZFRN Advisory Council, the Arizona Department of Economic Security and the Department of Child Safety among others all in the effort to support prevention efforts for children and families. Long-term sustainability and support for family resource centers is at the forefront of these conversations as a means to support families with young children.

Home Visitation Coordinated Referral:

This strategy is funded as a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. The grant partner implements the Parent Partners Plus (PPP) program and continues to streamline connecting families with the most appropriate home visitation program. PPP also manages the waitlist of families seeking home visitation

services and refers them to appropriate community resources. Waitlisted families are regularly engaged to receive information about other community resources. Since its inception, PPP has served over 25,000 caregivers. PPP convenes home visitation grant partners to work more intentionally and collaboratively in the community. Currently, 10 FTF-funded and 19 non-FTF-funded home visiting programs in Maricopa County participate in the Home Visitation Coordinated Referral (HVCR) Alliance. Additionally, PPP continues to coordinate opportunities among home visitation providers with branding, marketing, outreach and recruitment with consistent messaging.

PPP hosted a strategic planning session for the PPP Advisory Group members in December 2023 to gain their perspective on strategic priorities for the upcoming year. In advance of this meeting, alliance members completed the Wilder Collaboration Factors survey to identify areas for improvement in the collaboration. The survey showed strengths, including members seeing the collaboration as being in their self-interest, mutual respect and trust, flexibility and open and frequent communication. Areas for improvement included having multiple layers of participation and an appropriate cross-section of members. The PPP Advisory Group adjusted the alliance meetings to allow more staff participation at all levels of alliance member programs. PPP implemented these changes through June 2024. In July 2024, PPP hosted an alliance meeting and invited program staff/home visitors in addition to the manager, who usually attends, to allow for more staff participation at different levels. The focus of the meeting was self-care for home visitors and included time for networking with staff from other programs.

Challenges:

Family Resource Center:

The grant partner reports prevalent staffing challenges with the family support coordinator position due to staff recruitment and retention issues and high turnover rates in the Southeast Maricopa Region and statewide remains a barrier. Family resource center grant partners in the Southeast Maricopa Region say this is one of their biggest hurdles and leads to disruption in services and programs. Finding candidates who have degrees and are bilingual in English and Spanish is difficult.

To assist with staffing challenges, family resource center staff in the Southeast Maricopa Region obtained their Family Development Credential (FDC) and learned how to coach families to set and reach their goals for healthy self-reliance. To earn the FDC, staff took 80 hours of classes, created a portfolio documenting their ability to apply these concepts and skills and passed a standardized exam. Now, staff qualify to provide services as a family support liaison.

DESIRED OUTCOME: WELL-PREPARED, HIGHLY SKILLED AND APPROPRIATELY COMPENSATED PROFESSIONALS

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

Many early child care and education programs requested to receive an increased amount of child-focused consultation support, which prompted discussions about greater systemic needs to strengthen programmatic foundations and improve classroom mental health climates. Through these conversations, mental health consultants have helped child care directors and teachers recognize the value of creating classroom-focused and program-focused goals related to responding to children’s behaviors and understanding social and emotional development including self-regulation. Mental health consultants also helped child care directors improve their communications with child care teachers to prevent staff burnout and create more positive work environments.

First Things First College Scholarships:

In SFY24, 11 scholars completed 147 credit hours. So far in SFY25, 12 scholars finished 132 credit hours. Some scholars take more than a full-time class schedule to finish their degree quickly. The region currently does not have a waitlist and the strategy continues to be in high demand among early childhood educators in Southeast Maricopa.

Challenges:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

The grant partner reports that some early childhood education programs are waiting for service and recruitment efforts are underway. The grant partner is recruiting and actively seeking two additional mental health consultants to complete their team. Due to mental health professional shortages across Arizona and the nation, filling positions can be challenging. Sites waiting for a mental health consultant to become available continue to receive support from waitlist mental health consultants.

DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years

- o Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness (prioritized)
- o Media (prioritized)

Successes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness:

Engagement occurred with local government officials, economic development organizations and Chambers of Commerce in Mesa, Gilbert and Queen Creek to place a strong focus on business and economic development audiences. These partnerships extended our reach to new audiences across the region. Examples:

- A presentation at the Together in Service Mesa event with over 100 attendees offered an opportunity to reach faith, nonprofit and workforce development professionals. A regional council member played a role in guiding the session.
- The region used funds to sponsor events like the inaugural 4th Trimester AZ Maternal and Child Health Workforce Summit that reached healthcare, business, advocacy and nonprofits. The sponsorship included coordinating a breakout session on Early Childhood Education Policy and Advocacy. Over 250 attended.
- Two successful Quality First site tours occurred at the Mesa Community College Children's Center and a regional council member participated in planning and facilitation. Guests included state legislators, city economic development departments and Maricopa Community College leaders. The second site visit was in collaboration with the First Things First government affairs team.

In 2025, the regional council will continue a strategic effort to increase brand awareness, connect families with essential resources and establish partnerships that extend our reach to new audiences in the community. Plans are underway for other site visits in the Gilbert and Queen Creek communities. Additionally, the region is sponsoring the East Valley Business and Education Summit hosted by the Gilbert, Queen Creek, Mesa and Chandler chambers and the for Our Town Queen Creek breakfast hosted by the Queen Creek Chamber.

Media:

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the Southeast Maricopa Region raised awareness about the importance of early childhood development, connecting families to resources and empowering communities to support children from birth to age 5. Building on this success, the SFY25 media campaign will expand these efforts with 90 radio spots, ads placed on grocery carts in 29 local stores, digital billboards at two key locations, gas station pump toppers and posters

at five gas stations throughout the region. The targeted zip codes for these media campaign efforts include low-income zip codes in areas throughout the region.

DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Oral Health

- Oral Health (non-prioritized)

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change (non-prioritized)

Successes:

The Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council funds the Oral Health Programmatic Strategy and the Oral Health Systems Change Strategy.

Oral Health (Programmatic):

The grant partner goes above and beyond the Scope of Work. For example, medical/dental integration continues to be successful, with six retained pediatric medical providers. Currently, 20 dental charity care partnerships provide free dental care when needed. The grant partner serves children and expectant mothers who do not have medical or dental insurance and do not qualify for AHCCCS, so they refer patients to dental charity providers. The grant partner reports they resolved staffing issues. In the past, the grant partner staffed a full-time PRN (pro re nata, meaning as the need arises) oral health promotora, which provides basic health education on oral health, usually to parents and caregivers of children. After evaluating the current needs, they created a part-time promotora position to help meet the administrative needs of the program. This part-time position will also help cover other staff while they take paid time off.

Children’s Health System Change- Oral Health Systems Change

The Oral Health Systems Change Strategy focuses on promoting medical-dental integration in health settings for families with children birth to age 5. This effort is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa.

There are three overarching goals for this systems change strategy.

Goal 1: Promote education and awareness through a targeted oral health media campaign. First Things First’s Communications staff partnered with an external marketing agency to create a web page and digital content promoting the importance of taking care of baby teeth and seeing a dental provider at an early age. The content drives users to the Baby Teeth Matter website where parents and caregivers can learn more about pediatric oral health and connect them to a provider. The campaign launched from February - June 2024 and consisted of display and video social ads, 50% in English and 50% in Spanish. The campaign had high interaction rates and the most successful ad platforms will be relaunched in the SFY25 media campaign in January 2025.

Goal 2: Promote medical-dental integration (MDI) by implementing a pilot project at a community health center located in Maricopa County. The lead consultant is contracted with Neighborhood Outreach Access to Health (NOAH) to implement a medical-dental integration (MDI) pilot project at their Palomino Health Center located in Phoenix. The MDI pilot project activities for NOAH consist of:

Enhancing oral preventive care and MDI knowledge through training and collaboration among medical and dental care providers. Medical providers, including pediatricians and medical assistants, participated in Smiles for Life training sessions in Sept-Oct 2024 with follow-up training in March 2025.

Increasing MDI services for children birth to age 5 through:

- A. Participating in monthly MDI coaching sessions to review and improve clinical procedures, workflows, data collection, patient experience and program outcomes.
- B. Creating and providing patient education resources on the importance of preventive oral health measures. These materials are currently in production with a goal of dissemination in early 2025.
- C. Increasing the number of pediatric medical patients birth to age 5 receiving dental screenings, fluoride varnishes and referrals. This is primarily done through a dental hygienist who integrates dental services into well-child visits.

The project with NOAH officially launched in April 2024, and within the first six months of implementation, there were 1,300 children total (533 children birth-age 5) who received an oral health screening and 679 children total (262 children birth-age 5) who received a fluoride varnish. NOAH continues working to improve knowledge, practices and data collection with the hope of increasing provider knowledge and improving overall patient health.

Goal 3: Convene an MDI committee consisting of government, nonprofit and private community and health organizations. The contracted consultant convenes an MDI committee two to three times annually to provide project updates and collaborate on oral health systems change best practices and recommendations. This committee originated the vision and plans for the oral health media campaign in conjunction with the MDI pilot project.

Children’s Health System Change Strategy - Early Childhood Nutrition Team:

The Children’s Health System Change - Early Childhood Nutrition Team (ECNT) Strategy is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. The goal of the ECNT in each region is to coordinate efforts so that families with young children prenatal to age 5 in Maricopa County will be supported in providing nutritious food and establishing healthy eating habits while creating a community-based system of support for children’s health.

The Early Childhood Nutrition Team (ECNT), is broken up into three areas.

- 1) An advisory group works cross-regionally to support the overarching goals of increasing coordination between early childhood programs and food service providers to reduce food insecurity among families with children birth to age 5. Members across the six regional teams, policy team and advisory group, were asked to individually complete the Wilder Collaborations Factory Inventory, which is made up of 20 research-based factors that influences successful collaborations. The results showed that all teams scored collaboration, skilled leadership and trust as strengths of their work. Members also felt their work within the ECNT was meaningful and that they had concrete attainable goals for their respective teams.
- 2) The ECNT has a policy team that includes representatives from First Things First and the Arizona Department of Health Services to identify key areas to align messaging and identify best practices and tips to support early childhood providers to implement best practices and provide nutritious food. In quarter one of SFY24, a Safe Feeding infographic was piloted with eight early care and education providers. This infographic was designed to display best practices related to food environment, food preparation and feeding practices in an early childhood education center. It included using the most up to date best practice modeling information from entities, such as the Institute of Child Nutrition and the US Department of Agriculture. This will be a

supportive tool in centers to ensure providers are reminded of and following best practices related to safe feeding.

- 3) Lastly, each regional area has an ECNT addressing food insecurity at a local level. A regional team within the Southeast Maricopa Region convenes monthly to focus on meeting the nutritional needs of children and families in the community. Facilitator turnover early this year slowed collaboration efforts, and team attendance was low. Although there were challenges with recruiting key stakeholders from the Mesa community, efforts to be more intentional with outreach and recruitment have been successful. The FTF marketing team worked with facilitators to create recruitment flyers for the ECNT and the Mesa team recruited new members through these efforts. In quarter 3, the Mesa ECNT created a Farm Raiser Bag Summer Program. Working in collaboration with local cooperatives, the team provided and distributed 330 fresh farm bags of produce to families with young children. All totes include a printed recipe card and locally grown fresh produce offering higher nutritional value for children birth to age 5.

Challenges

The FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council funds the Oral Health Programmatic Strategy and the oral health component of the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy.

Oral Health (Programmatic):

The Oral Health strategy also serves expectant mothers by providing oral screenings, oral health risk assessments, education and navigation to a dental partner when needed. The grant partner reports finding partnerships that consistently provide large numbers of expectant mom screenings remains a concerning challenge. Many expectant mothers will avoid dental care because they fear the dentist, cannot afford services and hear mixed messages about the safety of dental care while pregnant. The grant partner is working to educate expectant mothers to overcome these barriers.

Recently, progress has been notable. The grant partner created a partnership with Choices Pregnancy. They’re also working diligently with preschools who have expectant mothers on staff and with community partners who do outreach to underserved populations. Examples:

- Started providing screenings to expectant moms at community partner baby showers.
- Rejoined Dignity Health Childbirth Prep classes since some resumed in-person.
- Work alongside medical providers, e.g., Dignity Health Mom Mobile.
- Drafted a partner agreement with WIC and anticipate moving forward in SFY25.

(Before the pandemic WIC locations were in person and provided a successful location to screen expectant mothers.)

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Child Welfare Prevention /Intervention

- Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change (non-prioritized)

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change:

This system change effort is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. Through strategy implementation, the regional councils partner with Maricopa County Juvenile Court to provide the necessary training and staff development to enhance the education and understanding of how to best support families with young children within the child welfare system.

In SFY24, some of the trainings delivered include:

An 18-month Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) training.

A Cradle to Crayons (C2C) virtual Court Procurement and Circle of Security training and a collaboration with Zero to Three to have two individuals assigned to provide technical assistance for the C2C/Safe Babies calendars in Maricopa County.

Additional trainings for systems partners have included Effects of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development, A Trauma Responsive System: Working with Young Children and their Parents Who Have Experienced Substance Use and Trauma, C2C Approach and Services and Understanding the Dynamic of Domestic Violence in Child Welfare. Additionally, Trauma-Responsive Courts provided for a Dependency Brown Bag training attended by 80 judges and attorneys.

Statewide Evaluation:

2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were delivered in June 2024 and approved by the Board in August 2024.